

Message Text

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EXDIS

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SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL ON CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. WE ARE DISTRESSED AT THE AUGUST 12 TIME EDITORIAL ENTITLED "NORMALIZED' PRAGUE." THE CAUSE OF OUR DISTRESS IS NOT THE ANTICIPATED RESPONSE FROM CZECHOSLOVAK OFFICIALDOM (WHICH WILL BE THE STRONGER SINCE NYTIMES CORRESPONDENT MALCOLM BROWNE WAS FINALLY GIVEN A VISA AND GOT A FAIRLY GOOD RECEPTION HERE), SOMETHING WE HAVE GROWN ACCUSTOMED TO. WE ARE DISTRESSED BECAUSE WE BELIEVE THE EDITORIAL MISLEADS THE TIMES' READERS ABOUT THE NATURE OF US POLICY TOWARDS CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND EASTERN EUROPE.

2. THERE IS NO POINT IN QUARRELING ABOUT THE DEGREE OF REPRESSIVENESS AMONG COMMUNIST REGIMES, ALTHOUGH IN POINT OF FACT WE BELIEVE BULGARIA, ROMANIA AND THE USSR AT A MINIMUM ARE GENERALLY MORE "REPRESSIVE" THAN HUSAK'S REGIME HERE. BUT WE BELIEVE THE DEPARTMENT NEEDS TO DEFEND OUR POLICY TOWARDS EASTERN EUROPE FROM ATTACKS SUCH AS THIS ONE WHICH MISREPRESENT WHQT "DETENTE" IS AIMED AT. THE EMBASSY RECOGNIZES THAT LETTERS TO THE EDITOR FROM THE DEPARTMENT ARE SENT RATHER RARELY, BUT WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS ONE OCCASION WHEN A LETTER WOULD BE WARRANTED.

3. FOLLOWING IS ONE POSSIBLE TEXT OF A LETTER TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EDITOR. THE CHARGE WOULD BE VERY HAPPY TO HAVE THE

LETTER SENT IN HIS NAME TO THE TIMES, IF IT DOES NOT VIOLATE DEPARTMENTAL POLICY TO HAVE SUCH A LETTER SENT IN FROM THE FIELD. HOWEVER, AS THE THRUST OF THE LETTER IS MORE CONCERNED WITH DETENTE IN GENERAL THAT WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN PARTICULAR, THE DEPARTMENT MAY FEEL IT MORE APPROPRIATE FOR IT (OR SOMETHING LIKE IT STATED IN OTHER LANGUAGE) BE SENT IN THE NAME OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY HQRTMAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARMITAGE, OR ANOTHER DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIAL.

4. BEGIN TEXT. I AM WRITING TO COMMENT ON YOUR EDITORIAL OF AUGUST 12 ABOUT CZECHOSLOVAKIA ENTITLED "NORMALIZED' PRAGUE." I BELIEVE THE EDITORIAL IS BASED ON WRONG PREMISES AS REGARDS UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARDS EASTERN EUROPE.

5. THERE IS ROOM FOR ARGUMENT ABOUT WHICH IS THE "MOST REPRESSIVE" REGIME IN EASTERN EUROPE, BUT THAT IS NOT THE POINT OF THIS LETTER. OUR POLICY TOWARDS EASTERN EUROPE IS BASED UPON A RECOGNITION THAT REPRESSION EXISTS, AND UPON THE DESIRE, IN SPITE OF THAT, TO WORK TOWARDS MORE NORMAL RELATIONS. ONE REASON FOR THIS IS THE CONVICTION, WHICH WE BELIEVE IS SHARED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, THAT THHROUGH INCREASINGLY NORMAL RELATIONS--WHAT IS OFTEN KNOWN BY THE CURRENT CATCHWORD "DETENTE"--GRADUALLY CONDITIONS WILL IMPROVE FOR THE POLULATIONS OF EASTERN EUROPE. THE ALTERNATIVE TO THIS POLICE IS A PERPETUATION OF TENSIONS WHICH MIGHT ENTAIL THE INCREASED DANGER OF HOSTILITIES, AND WHICH IN ANY EVENT CAN HARDLY BE EXPECTED TO HELP THE LOT OF THE EAST EUROPEAN PEOPLES.

6. SPECIFICALLY, AS REGARDS CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THERE HAS HARDLY BEEN ANY "UNSEEMLY HASTE." WE HAVE NEGOTIATED CLAIMS AGREEMENTS WILL ALL THE OTHER SOCIALIST STATES OF EASTERN EUROPE WITH WHICH WE HAVE RELATIONS. WE DID SO WITH CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1964, AND AGAIN IN 1974, AND BOTH TIMES REPUDIATED THE AGREEMENT AFTER IT HAD BEEN INITIALED. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE CLAIMANTS ARE EAGER FOR A SETTLEMENT TO BE MADE FINAL, SO THAT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THEY CAN GET SOME RETURN ON THEIR CLAIMS (FOR PROPERTIES NATIONALIZED AFTER 1948). AS FOR THE GOLD, THE EIGHTEEN TONS REPRESENTS PART OF THE GOLD SEIZED IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY THE NAZIS DURING WORLD WAR II. BY TREATY, WE HAVE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT IT BELONGS TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, AND I FAIL TO SEE THE INJUSTICE IN RETURNING TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA THE GOLD LOOTED FROM THEM THIRTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

7. THE ESSENTIAL POINT, HOWEVER, ABOUT THE EDITORIAL IS ITS ARGUMENT THAT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS SHOULD AWAIT "SERIOUS SIGNS OF REAL NORMALIZATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA." BUT THIS IS A POLICY THAT WAS TREID FOR MANY YEARS TOWARDS THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, AND IT DID NOT WORK. CURRENT AMERICAL POLICY, BASED ON THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF EUROPE, IS DESIGNED, IN ACCORD WITH OUR NATO ALLIES, TO NORMALIZE EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN ORDER TO REDUCE THE DANGER OF CONFLICT AND IN ORDER TO HELP THE PEOPLES OF EASTERN EUROPE TOWARDS A BETTER LIFE OVER THE LONG RUN. THIS WAS THE STATED AIM OF THE PRESIDENT IN GOING TO HELSINKI AND SIGNING THE DOCUMENTS AGREED TO AT THE CONFERENCE OF SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE. WE BELIEVE THIS POLICY OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS HAS ALREADY BORNE FRUIT IN SOME SPECIFIC WAYS, AND WE BELIEVE IT IS STILL THE ONLY WISE POLICY TO PURSUE. IF THIS POLICY IS VALID IN MOSCOW AND BUCHAREST, IT IS ALSO VALID IN PRAGUE. END TEXT.
PERRY

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